

ART. XI.—*Case of Ascites, in which the patient was tapped, in ten years, one hundred and eighty-six times, and had seven hundred and fifty-one and three-fourth gallons of water drawn off.* By JOHN H. GRIFFIN, M. D., of Virginia.

IN the report of the following case, I am forced to rely mainly on the statement of Mr. Armstrong, the husband of the lady who is the subject of it, as all the physicians who attended her, or had an opportunity of examining it, except myself (Drs. Nash, Dawson, Dillon, and Bentley), are now dead, and my own recollection, after the lapse of seventeen years, is too indistinct to be relied on, especially as I had but two opportunities of investigating it, and did not then anticipate that the duty of reporting it would devolve on me. The statements of Mr. Armstrong, however, a man of intelligence, who took notes at the time, may be fully relied on, as far as they go; and it is chiefly to be regretted that more is not known of the early history of the case, the appearance, growth, size, &c., of the tumours, which evidently caused the dropsical effusion.

I am informed, by Mr. Armstrong, that his wife first began to complain in the fall of 1820, then 25 years old, when she was attacked with severe pain in the left side, and that, after it had continued for some time, a tumour made its appearance in the left hypogastric region, or, to use his own language, "between the middle of the abdomen and the upper part of the hip bone." At this time, she was attended by Dr. G. P. Nash, who, he thinks, considered it an enlarged spleen, and continued to prescribe under this impression, until the next spring, when two others made their appearance on the right side, one of which attained the size of a man's fist, the other remained stationary after it was first observed. The tumour on the left side was larger than either of those on the right, of an irregular, knotted, pyramidal shape, which, rising out of the pelvis, occupied a considerable portion of the left side of the cavity of the abdomen, and, when I examined it (August, 1832), was tender to the touch. She continued to take medicine at intervals, until the 22d of February, 1826, when an abortion of a male foetus took place, supposed to be at the third month of pregnancy. In 1830, she was first observed to be dropsical, when Dr. S. G. Dawson, late of Putnam, Ohio, was requested to see her, and who continued to attend her until the summer of 1832. On the 22d of June, following, she was delivered of two male children, supposed to be at the sixth month of pregnancy; one of which lived twenty-four hours, the other was born dead. After this, "remedies for dropsy" were occasionally, though not very perseveringly, used until the summer or fall of 1832, when they were finally abandoned.

On the 22d of November, 1830, she was first tapped (by Dr. Dawson), when six and a half gallons of water were drawn off. She was not again tapped until the 8th of October of the following year. After this, the water

continued to accumulate rapidly. In 1832 she was tapped ten times, in 1833 twenty-six times, in 1834 twenty-five times, in 1835 twenty-six times, in 1836 twenty-seven times, in 1837 twenty-six times, in 1838 twenty-six times, in 1839 seventeen times, and in March, 1840, she was tapped for the last time—in all, *one hundred and eighty-six times* (186), and *seven hundred and fifty-one and three-fourths* ($751\frac{3}{4}$) gallons of water, of a clear straw colour, drawn off. The size of the tumours gradually diminished, until they finally disappeared, but could be distinctly felt, on either side of the pelvis, for some time after the last tapping; since which time she has enjoyed almost uninterrupted good health. Indeed, during the entire period, her general health continued good, and she suffered but little except the inconvenience caused by the accumulation of the water. She is now able to walk several miles, without fatigue, which I have frequently, within the last few weeks, known her do, in her benevolent attentions to the sick of her neighbourhood.

I am aware that a number of cases have been reported, in which the operation of tapping has been borne a great number of times, and that in some, an almost incredible quantity of water has been drawn off. In the April number of this Journal, a case is referred to by Professor Peaslee, of Dartmouth College, mentioned by Burard, in which the patient was tapped 665 times in 13 years. In the case reported in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1784 by Martineau, referred to by Watson, the patient, in twenty-six years, was tapped eighty times and 6631 *pts.* or upwards of 13 hogsheads of fluid drawn off.